

THE ALFORDS OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE, BERKSHIRE, AND YORKSHIRE

This is the senior of the three chief branches of the Alford family, extended over a period of about two hundred years, spreading from Holt Castle, in co. Denbigh, to Meaux Abbey and Beverley, and Bilton in Yorkshire, then also to Fawley Court, on the banks of the Thames, in Buckinghamshire, and finally to Hurley and High Wycombe, in Berkshire.

The armorial bearings of this branch of the family were: "Gules, six pears or, three and three, stalks upward, with a chief of the last. Crest: a boar's head."

The Coat of Arms—"Gules, six pears, and a chief or" was originally granted to the Alfords of Holt, co. Denbigh, and confirmed to the descendants of this family as follows: at the Visitation of York, 1612 to Sir William Alford of Bilton; at the Visitation of Sussex, 1634, to John Alford of Offington; at the Visitation of London, 1634, to John Alford of the said City.

Meaux Abbey, in the parish of Waghen or Wawne, in that part of Yorkshire called Holderness, was an ancient monastic building of much interest and importance. A drawing of the last century shows only some ruined arches and columns, but even these are now almost destroyed. Launcelot Alford, who died 1562, was the first of the family who possessed it, his nephew, Sir Launcelot, succeeding him. Sir William, his son, came next, and there being no male heir it passed to his daughter, Dorothy Alford. Through her marriage with Sir Thomas Grantham this splendid property passed at her death (in 1657) into other hands.

The Record Office "State Papers," 1558, contain "Particulars of the late Monastery of Meaux, Yorks, leased to Launcelot Alford in 1540."

In the reign of Elizabeth, Launcelot Alford was Member of Parliament for Beverley once, and Edward Alford twice. In the reign of Charles I, William Alford was returned three times, and after his third election was knighted. The *History of Beverley* speaks of the Alfords as "a very old Yorkshire family."

Beverlae (pp. 390 and 391), gives these particulars more definitely, including amongst the members for that Borough:

7th Parliament of Elizabeth, Launcelot Alford
8th Parliament of Elizabeth, Edward Alford
9th Parliament of Elizabeth, Edward Alford
1st Parliament of Charles I, William Alford
2nd Parliament of Charles I, William Alford
3rd Parliament of Charles I, Sir William Alford, Knt.

We commence this line with:

1. John Alford, senior, of Holt Castle, was the eldest son of Thomas Alford of Holt, and Jane Salisbury, his wife. He married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Bryan Withyforth, and through them continued the senior line of Holt Castle, and from him came also the Alfords of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Yorkshire.

Their sons were:

- i. John Alford, of whom hereafter (2),
- ii. William Alford, the second son, graduated at Oxford, and took Holy Orders. Foster's Alumni Oxonienses records: "Alford, William, Secular Priest, B. A. 1522." He was living in 1566 when he was a legatee under his brother Peter's will.
- iii. Peter Alford of Sutton, in Yorkshire, near Meaux Abbey, died 1566, and was buried in the church of Sutton.
- iv. Launcelot Alford, was the founder, through his nephew, for he left no son, of the family afterwards of some note in Yorkshire. He lived at Meaux Abbey in Holterness, of which fine estate and splendid pile he took a long lease in 1540. He died in 1562, and was buried in Beverley Minster.

2. John Alford, junior, eldest son of John Alford and Elizabeth Withyforth of Holt, succeeded his father in the possession of Holt Castle. He married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir John Pickering of Holt, Knight, and had five sons:

- i. John Alford, of whom hereafter (3),
- ii. Sir Launcelot Alford, nephew of the above-mentioned Launcelot, succeeded his uncle at Meaux Abbey in 1562. Amongst the "Governors of Beverley incorporated by Queen Elizabeth" stands the name of Sir Launcelot Alford, 1573. He became M.P. for Beverley in 1588, was Mayor of the Town in 1591; and was knighted by James I, at York, in 1603. He married Ann, daughter of Sir William Knowles of Bilton in Yorkshire, the estate of Bilton descending to their son:

Sir William Alford, only son of Sir Launcelot, was born in 1571, and matriculated at Magdalen College, Oxford, as William Alford of Yorks, gent., in 1586, aged 15. At first described as "of Bilton," he afterwards appears to have succeeded his father at Meaux Abbey. "Sir William Alford of Bilton had a grant of lands in Meaux in 1634." His London residence was in the parish of St. Dunstan, where a list of owners of "Faire Houses in the Friars, 1628," includes "Sir Wm. Alford." He was Member for Beverley from 1625 to 1628, in which latter year he, too, received the honour of knighthood.

The Record Office "State Papers" give the following: "1626. Sir William Alford reports to Buckingham, proceedings under the Duke's commission with relation to three ships cast ashore at Barmeston."

Sir William was twice married, first to Elizabeth daughter of Robert Rokes of Fawley, Bucks, and secondly to Elizabeth, daughter of William Clarke of Weston, Oxfordshire.

Sir William Alford had no son, but two daughters by each marriage. His eldest daughter Margaret married, in 1640, Sir Robert Strickland of Westmoreland, who fought at Edgehill for the King, and died childless. His second daughter Ann, was buried at Waghon Yorks, in 1659, a spinster. The third daughter Elizabeth, also died unmarried. His youngest daughter, and ultimate heiress, Dorothy, married Sir Thomas Grantham, inherited Meaux Abbey from her father, and died in 1657.

A small silver ring, in the possession of the Compiler, was discovered in the ruins of Meaux Abbey some years ago. It is inscribed "Sir William Allford of Mewx."

- iii. Edward Alford was M.P. for Beverley in 1592 and 1597,
- iv. Arthur Alford,
- v. Calvin Alford.

3. John Alford, the third of that name, of Holt, was the eldest son and heir of John Alford (junior) of Holt Castle. He married Elizabeth Oglethorpe of Newenton, Oxfordshire, and settled at Fawley Court, Buckinghamshire, on the banks of the Thames. When, on his father's death, Holt Castle came into his possession, he sold it, together with the Manor of Aldford, shortly before 1600, in which year he died. He had two sons, John who died in childhood, and Henry who succeeded him. John Alford was patron of the living of Fawley, and presented Richard Clerk, A.B., to it in 1583. Langley's History of Desborough, a part of the county of Buckingham (pp. 187 and 198), speaks of Fawley Court and Manor, which "came to the Alford's by marriage." From Alford this Manor came to Sir James Whitelock, but whether by purchase or by descent is uncertain.

In the *Royal Commission Papers*, xxii, 143, etc., 1650, concerning Viscount Dunbar, mention is made of John Alford, deceased, and Sir William Alford, as trustees.

John Alforde of Fawley in the Co. of Buckingham, Esquire, 1600, "To my wife Elizabeth . . . lands . . . tenements . . . in the County of Bucks . . . of Oxfordshire . . . and elsewhere . . . for her life. Remainder thereof to my son Henrie Alford, and in default of his surviving to my nephew William, son of my brother Launcelot Alforde . . . My cousin Edward Alforde."

John Alford and Elizabeth Oglethorpe had issue:

- i. John Alford died young,
- ii. Henry Alford of whom next (4)

4. Henry Alford, of Hall Place, Hurley, esquire, was born about 1578, and matriculated at Exeter College, Oxford, in 1594, at the age of 15. He was admitted to Gray's Inn in 1601, afterwards qualifying as a Barrister, Hall Place, in Berkshire, where he lived, in an estate close to Fawley, although in another county. Henry Alford married Bridget de la Pole of Coates, Glos., and had four sons and four daughters. He died at the age of 67, and was buried at Fawley, in the chancel of which Church stands a monument to his memory.

Fawley, Buckinghamshire. (In the Chancel.)

Arms: Gules, six pears or, impaling azure seme de fleur-de-lys.

"Henricus Alford, Armiger.
Equestri familia in agro Eboraconai prognatus.
Obiit apud manerium suum de
Hall Place in Hurley co. Berks.
Oct. 14, 1645. Aetatis Suse 67."

Also 7 Brigetta de la Pole wife of the above Henry Alford.

The children of Henry and Bridget Alford were:

- i. Henry Alford,
- ii. Thomas Alford, of whom next (5),
- iii. William Alford, to whom the following probably refers:
 In the Civil War in the reign of Charles I, "William Alford, Lieutenant in Lord Grandison's Regiment in the Royalist army," is mentioned in 1640; also "Captain Alford in 1642 who `took part in the taking of Cirencester by Prince Rupert, under whom he served in the King's Army."
- iv. John Alford,
- v. Mary
- vi. Catherine, m. 1625, George Manby,
- vii. Beatrice,
- viii. Agnes.

5. Thomas Alford of Hall Place, of whom we have no further particulars, is presumed to have been the father of:

- i. Anne Alford of Hall Place, who was doubtless the last of this line of Alford. She died in 1679, and her will is to the following effect:

Anne Alford of Hall Place, in the parish of Hurley in the co. of Berks, spinster, 1679. "To be buried att the Parish Church of Fawley, under the stone where my Ancestors lye buried . . . My Kinswoman Katherine Powle, daughter of Henry Powle of Williamstrop¹ in the Co. of Gloucester . . . To the poore of Harley . . To the Poore of Fawley . . . To my niece's husband George Bewes, Clerke, a ring . . . to the said Henry Powle and to George Perin of Harley, all my estate in houses, lands, etc., upon trust for my beloved niece Elizageth Bewes, wife of the said George Bewes of Sprotby in the County of York, Clerke, and to her children; and failing issue, to my loving Cosen Henry Powle of Williamstrop, Esquire." P.C.C., 125 King

It seems probable that the Alford's who settled at High Wycombe, in Buckinghamshire, were cadets of the Berkshire family.

Thomas Alford was Mayor of Chipping, or High Wycombe, in Buckinghamshire, in the reign of William and Mary, and again in the reign of Anne, 1702 to 1704. He died in the latter year, and his monument, bearing the Alford arms, is in the parish church.

High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire.

Arms: Six pears or.

"Here lyeth the body of Thomas Alford, of this town, who departed his life the 17th day, 1704; in the 59th year of his age, and during the second time of his Mayoralty."

George Alford, son of the above Thomas, and also of High Wycombe, became Mayor of that town in 1710, and died childless in the same year. His will is to the following effect:

George Alford, of Cheping Wycomb (High Wycombe), Bucks, Gentleman, 1710. "To my dear Wife Isabella Alford, messuages, with stables, out-houses, orchards, gardens, where I now dwell, in Mary Street. My nephew Thomas Alford Anderton . . . my niece his sister. My sister Mary Anderton . . . My mother in law Alford, my aunt Susan Bringhurst, my brother in law John Storer, to each of them a gold ring. My said wife Isabela, Executrix." P.C.C., 103 Smith

This senior, or first, branch of the northern family appears to have died out. Nothing has been found to indicate that it has continued by any cadet lines.

1. Williamstrip, in 1670 the property of Henry Powle, Speaker of the House of Commons, is now a seat of Viscount St. Aidwyn. Henry Powle was summoned to the Heralds' Visitation of Gloucestershire in 1683-4, but did not enter his pedigree.